

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

North Carolina prepares for White Nose Syndrome

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

As winter sets in, biologists in North Carolina are busy preparing for the possible arrival of White-Nose Syndrome, or WNS. WNS is a mysterious affliction that is nearly always fatal to bats. It was first documented in a New York cave in 2006 and has since spread north and south, killing hundreds of thousands of bats. The affliction is associated with a newly described fungus which often forms white tufts on the muzzles of infected bats.

Thus far, WNS has spread as far south as southwest Virginia, prompting biologists in Tennessee and North Carolina to prepare for its potential arrival. Deaths are most apparent in the winter, when bats are usually hibernating. In addition to the white tufts, other indicators of white nose syndrome include:

- Damaged wings, including holes;
- Bats flying outside during the day when temperatures are at or below freezing;
- Bats clustered near the entrance of hibernation sites; and
- Dead or dying bats on the ground or on buildings, trees, or other structures.

In an effort to get as accurate of a picture as possible about the spread of this affliction, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has created an e-mail address to accept reports of possible outbreaks. If you see any indicator of WNS, e-mail WhiteNoseBats@fws.gov with your report and a picture if possible.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.